

Reader's Report on Three poems submitted for critique (completed April 30, 2025)

Thank you for sharing these three poems with me. I will respond to each poem separately, and give you specific suggestions for revision.

Reader's Comments on "An Old Feather's Last Flight"

This well-written lyrical poem has three stanzas with AB, AB rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme adds a musical sensibility to the feather's flight and creates a sense of slowing down time. Stylistically, each new line should start with a capital letter if there is a period at the end of the previous line. There is a strong sense of wonder and yet resigned sadness that is well expressed through the extended metaphor of the old feather. One feels that the speaker personally relates to this flight.

I will break down my comments by stanza.

First stanza: Great verb choices, "spinning," and "tilting." "Beautifully unknown to all but one," sets up the poem well, telling us that the speaker is observing something powerful and relatable in watching the old feather.

Second stanza: Spelling error. Should be valleys. Consider editing out some wordiness that feels redundant or unnecessary, such as "high" before skies, and "only" before freedom and love.

The rhyme you seek in the last sentence that goes with "eternal song being silently sought" is somewhat awkward. Consider rewriting it with another word that rhymes with "naught," such as bought, caught, thought.

Third stanza: The perspective shifts from the feather's journey to the speaker. It is a bit jarring. There is some awkward phrasing in line 3: "my soul requires the night in bringing the dawn." Consider editing it for brevity and sound, "my soul requires the night before the dawn," or something similar.

To consider: revise the final line to offer more of an insight, rather than end with "feel the fall." What is the feeling? Use vivid description, or turn to a sensual detail. What is seen, heard, smelled, or touched that marks a turn to end the poem? Endings are difficult, but should offer an insight, a change, or some impactful shift.

Reader's comments on poem "Truthful Delusion"

Overall, this poem that features end rhyme every two lines creates a strong sense of rhythm and flow. The theme is quite universal: a person who cannot realize how much they are missing due to arrogance or ego, or fear. I will comment specifically on the lines in the poem that had outstanding wording, and where I suggest some possible edits.

Line 4 Strong line overall. But "bestow" should be in the past tense and consistent with the other verb tenses in the poem.

Line 5 Strong: "bundled tidy and neat"

Line 6 Strong. "Silt causing mud to appear"

Line 7 should be "a fear-clouded mind." Add article (a) and hyphen.

Line 11 Strong. "I perceive a blue that's bluer."

Next to the last line: feels too long and wordy. Consider cutting "stories." It is not needed.

Last line: subject/object is abstract. Instead, try to describe the kinds of truth you refer to more concretely. Why not use metaphor or simile, perhaps? Or a noun—perhaps a color in keeping with your earlier references to color as to the different types of truth.

Reader's Comments on poem "Dark Whisperer"

This poem was the least specific of the three and the language relied on some cliches. Consider making it clearer; if this evil force is supernatural, human, non-human or in the speaker's mind or a combination of these. There are allusions to the loss of sight, but also to a delay in time. How do those affect the speaker? What is happening to them?

For this poem, I suggest moving away from end rhyme and try to write it in free verse. End rhyme is too limiting. Free verse without end rhyme provides the freedom to explore the topic and get into what exactly is this dark whisperer, what has it done, or what will it do? Besides end rhyme, there are other poetic types of rhyme or near rhyme, such as internal rhyme which is rhyme within a line (the *last* one *cast* a shadow) and of course alliteration, same letters or sounds adjacent or closely connected (*another* mother, *a* niece and *a* nephew).

"Strangle my mind" in the last line is an awkward metaphor. Keep working on the ending.

SUGGESTIONS/EXERCISES

1. Use random word generator <https://randomwordgenerator.com/>

Random words can take us in a direction we had not thought of. I use them all the time as prompts and often the results are amazing. Set it at five words. Incorporate the random words into a poem you have already drafted to change the direction of the poem and try something new and to break out of the limited end rhyme pattern. Or, write a new poem using one of the words in each of the first five lines of your poem. Do not plan the subject of your poem in advance. See where the random words lead you.

2. Read a poem or poems by five or six famous poets from different backgrounds and styles, such as Emily Dickinson, Pablo Neruda, William Butler Yeats, Derek Walcott, and Audre Lorde. Notice how each poet creates a "persona" or speaker, and notice the types of vocabulary each poem draws on. Notice how they break their lines, and how they use space on the page. Summarize the meaning of each poem in your own words. What do you like best about each poet's work? What are some techniques you can try from these

poems? Write a response to at least one of the poems you chose in the form of a poem that addresses a theme or topic that poet used. Write a new poem that uses words or one line from a poet you like. Start or end a new poem with a line from a famous poet.

I enjoyed reading these poems. Keep on writing! I also suggest you read your work out loud and notice where you may stumble or find words that don't quite fit.